

(19) World Intellectual Property Organization
International Bureau



(43) International Publication Date
20 December 2001 (20.12.2001)

PCT

(10) International Publication Number
WO 01/97101 A2

(51) International Patent Classification⁷: **G06F 17/60**

(21) International Application Number: PCT/CA01/00884

(22) International Filing Date: 13 June 2001 (13.06.2001)

(25) Filing Language: English

(26) Publication Language: English

(30) Priority Data:
09/596,520 16 June 2000 (16.06.2000) US

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(81) Designated States (*national*): AE, AG, AL, AM, AT, AU,
AZ, BA, BB, BG, BR, BY, BZ, CA, CH, CN, CO, CR, CU,
CZ, DE, DK, DM, DZ, EC, EE, ES, FI, GB, GD, GE, GH,
GM, HR, HU, ID, IL, IN, IS, JP, KE, KG, KP, KR, KZ, LC,
LK, LR, LS, LT, LU, LV, MA, MD, MG, MK, MN, MW,
MX, MZ, NO, NZ, PL, PT, RO, RU, SD, SE, SG, SI, SK,
SL, TJ, TM, TR, TT, TZ, UA, UG, UZ, VN, YU, ZA, ZW.

(84) Designated States (*regional*): ARIPO patent (GH, GM,
KE, LS, MW, MZ, SD, SL, SZ, TZ, UG, ZW), Eurasian
patent (AM, AZ, BY, KG, KZ, MD, RU, TJ, TM), European
patent (AT, BE, CH, CY, DE, DK, ES, FI, FR, GB, GR, IE,
IT, LU, MC, NL, PT, SE, TR), OAPI patent (BF, BJ, CF,
CG, CI, CM, GA, GN, GW, ML, MR, NE, SN, TD, TG).

Published:

— with declaration under Article 17(2)(a); without abstract;
title not checked by the International Searching Authority

*For two-letter codes and other abbreviations, refer to the "Guid-
ance Notes on Codes and Abbreviations" appearing at the begin-
ning of each regular issue of the PCT Gazette.*

(54) Title: DELIVERY OF REMOTELY-ORDERED PRODUCTS

(57) Abstract:



WO 01/97101 A2

Delivery of Remotely-Ordered Products

Background of the Invention

This relates to the ordering and delivery of remotely-ordered products.

A typical sequence for the remote ordering and delivery of products is depicted in Fig. 1. At step 10 a customer accesses a vendor's sales site. This could be done by accessing a web-site via the Internet. Once the customer has accessed the sales site, he or she places an order at step 12. In the case of an order entered via the Internet, the web-site provides to the customer's computer one or more screens that allow the customer to enter the details of the order into the vendor's order processing computer. Optionally, additional screens are also provided to supply to the customer product information and/or a selection of products. Alternatively, the sales site can be accessed by a telephone call to a phone number maintained by the vendor for receiving orders; and the order may be entered by the customer directly into an order processing computer maintained by the vendor or the order may be received by an operator and entered by the operator. These steps can also be performed by mail. In this case, the order is received by an operator who acts on behalf of the vendor and is entered into the vendor's order processing system.

Many ordering systems provide a confirmation of the order as at step 14. In the case of an order entered via the Internet, the confirmation is typically provided by email to an address supplied by the customer at the time the order is entered. Confirmation of shipment as at step 16 is likewise provided by email to the address supplied by the customer. Other systems may confirm an order and/or a shipment by a phone message or by mail. Still other systems may do neither.

Eventually, the customer receives the product ordered as at step 18. Regardless of how the product was ordered, typically, delivery is by mail or by a package delivery service such as Fed Ex or United Parcel Service.

As has been appreciated, these remote-ordering systems offer tremendous efficiencies on the ordering side. It no longer is necessary for the customer to travel to the vendor to enter an order for a product. Moreover, in the case of a manual order entry system, a single operator can typically process far more orders per unit time than a single sales clerk can when dealing with individual customers in a store.

Further, the order taking process can be automated completely as in the case of Internet based ordering systems and some telephone ordering systems, thereby achieving even greater efficiencies.

5 The order taking process can be regarded as a many-to-one process with many customers submitting orders to a vendor through one site. As is apparent, this many-to-one process can be made quite efficient by exploiting the advantages of telecommunications in general and the Internet in particular to concentrate the orders of many customers on one site.

10 The same cannot be said of the other half of the process of Fig. 1, the delivery of the ordered products from a vendor to its many customers. This one-to-many process is not able to take the same advantage of telecommunications since its object is to place physical products in the hands of customers who typically are widely dispersed. As a result, the delivery of products is typically a one-to-one process with a delivery person seeking out each customer to deliver each ordered product
15 individually.

Some efforts have been made to reduce the inefficiencies of such a one-to-one process. A widespread example is the Post Office box system in which a set of mail boxes is located at a central location such as the local Post Office. While these boxes are used by many for the receipt of mail and conceivably could be used by some for
20 accepting delivery of products, they do not offer a general solution to the delivery problem. For example, since a unique mail box of a certain size is assigned to each Post Office box customer for an entire rental period, the customer has no way to adjust the size of the box or period of use of the box to suit his needs. The box may be too large or too small and it may be needed for delivery of a constant stream of
25 products, an occasional product or none at all. Moreover, while delivery of products through mail boxes at a local Post Office does have the advantage of eliminating the need for a delivery person who travels to the customers' locations to deliver products, it achieves this advantage only by shifting to the customers the need to travel to the Post Office to pick up the products they ordered. In many cases, this inconvenience
30 can be sufficiently great as to completely offset any convenience that is gained by ordering the product remotely. As a result, a potential customer may decide to buy the product in a store rather than order it remotely.

A possible solution to some of these problems is described in U.S. Patent 4,894,717 for a "Delivered Article Storage Control System." This patent describes storage box systems that are intended for use in "multiple dwelling houses, such as condominiums," office buildings and "tenant buildings," presumably apartment
5 buildings. The storage box system includes a plurality of lockable storage lockers into which articles may be placed by delivery persons and from which the articles may be retrieved by residents of the building. The '717 patent focuses on an automated system that allows the delivery person to place articles in the lockers and obtain a receipt for them without intervention by someone who supervises the storage
10 lockers.

Among other things, however, the '717 patent does not integrate the ordering and delivery systems, it requires the use of identification cards and uniquely assigned lockers and it does not take advantage of the Internet.

Summary of the Invention

15 The present invention addresses these and other issues by providing a method and apparatus for facilitating the entry of customer orders for products, for tracking the progress of the order, and for delivering the product to the customer through conveniently located service centers.

20 In a preferred embodiment, the method of the present invention comprises the steps of:

receiving from a vendor order information comprising identification of a customer, identification of a product that has been ordered, and identification of a destination to which the product is to be shipped;

25 receiving the ordered product at the destination;
placing the ordered product in a secure storage area;
notifying the customer that the ordered product is available at the secure storage area; and

providing the ordered product to the customer.

30 Advantageously, the secure storage area is protected by an electronic lock having a resettable access code and the method of the present invention further comprises the step of changing the access code on the electronic lock after the ordered product is removed from the secure storage area. Advantageously, each customer has

a unique access code.

The order information may be received from the customer via a web-site maintained by the product vendor or by the delivery service.

5 In a second preferred embodiment, the method of the present invention comprises the steps of:

providing an Internet based web site for the sale and distribution of products, said web site containing an order entry display to be accessed by a dedicated class of customers;

10 providing a dedicated pick up destination for products ordered via the order entry display located in close physical proximity to said class of customers;

receiving from a customer which is a member of said class of customers via the order entry display product order information including an identification of product and dedicated pick up destination;

15 notifying the vendor via the Internet of the order information; receiving the ordered product from the vendor at the dedicated pick up destination;

notifying the customer via the Internet that the ordered product is available for pick up at the dedicated pick up destination; and

20 facilitating the delivery of the product to the customer at said destination.

In a third preferred embodiment, the method of the present invention comprises the steps of:

25 providing an Internet based web site for the sale and distribution of products, said web site containing an order entry display to be accessed by a dedicated class of customers;

providing a dedicated pick up destination for products ordered via the order entry display located in close physical proximity to said class of customers;

30 facilitating through said web site the delivery directly to vendors of order entry display product order information including an identification of product and dedicated pick up destination;

receiving the ordered product from the vendor at the dedicated pick up destination;

notifying the customer via the Internet that the ordered product is available for pick up at the dedicated pick up destination; and facilitating the delivery of the product to the customer at said destination.

5 In a fourth preferred embodiment, the method of the present invention comprises the steps of:

providing an Internet based web site for the sale of services, said web site containing an order entry display to be accessed by a dedicated class of customers;

10 providing a dedicated pick up destination for features of that service ordered via the order entry display located in close physical proximity to said class of customers;

receiving from a customer which is a member of said class of customers via the order entry display service order information including an
15 identification of service and dedicated pick up destination;

notifying the vendor via the Internet of the order information; and receiving a feature of the ordered service from the vendor at the dedicated pick up destination, and notifying the customer via the Internet that the feature of the ordered services is available for pick up at the dedicated pick up
20 destination.

Brief Description of Drawings

These and other objects features and advantages of the invention will be more readily apparent from the following detailed description of the invention in which:

Fig. 1 is a flowchart illustrating a prior art remote-ordering delivery process;
25 Fig. 2 is a block diagram depicting a preferred embodiment of the invention;
Fig. 3 is a block diagram depicting a computer system used in the practice of the invention;

Fig. 4 is a schematic representation of the interaction between a customer, a vendor and a preferred embodiment of the present invention;

30 Figs. 5-1 through 5-15 are flowcharts illustrating details of the operation of the present invention.

Detailed Description

As shown in Fig. 2, illustrative apparatus for practicing the invention comprises a management system 30, a plurality of service centers 70 and at least one set of electronically controlled storage lockers 80 at each service center 70.

5 The management system is primarily a computer system. As shown in more detail in Fig. 3, the computer system includes a primary computer 40 and a plurality of satellite computers 60, at least one of which is located at each service center 70. Each computer comprises a processor 42 or 62, a memory 44 or 64, input devices 46 or 66, output devices 48 or 68, and a communications interface 52 or 72, which are
10 interconnected by an internal communications bus 54 or 74. Illustrative such computers are personal computers that include Pentium processors. Illustrative input devices are keyboards and mice. Illustrative output devices are video displays and printers. In the case of the satellite computers, the input and output devices also include a signaling interface to the storage lockers 80. Communications between the
15 primary computer and the satellite computers go through the communications interfaces 52 and 72. Any suitable communication system may be used to link interfaces 52 and 72.

Different arrangements of the primary and satellite computers can be made. At present, it is expected that the entire system will be run from the primary computer
20 and that the satellite computers will serve as little more than communication interfaces to the storage lockers. Other arrangements, however, are well within the spirit and scope of the invention. Computer programs stored in memories 44 and 64 control the management system to perform the steps described below in conjunction with Fig. 4.

25 It is contemplated that the system of Fig. 2 will be deployed over a wide geographical area: a metropolitan region, several provinces or states, (as in Canada and the United States), entire countries or even the world. In accordance with the invention, the service centers will be located at points of high pedestrian traffic. Examples of such points are the lobbies of large office buildings, commuter and long-
30 distance bus and train stations, airports, sports facilities and entertainment centers, and shopping malls. Since a typical customer is likely to be an office worker, service center locations in large office towers or busy stations at one end or the other of a

commuter's trip are especially desirable.

Each service center preferably supports a plurality of electronically controlled storage lockers 80. The lockers at each center are uniquely identified by unique codes such as numbers or other symbols and preferably have various sizes so as to be able to
5 accommodate packages of different sizes. Advantageously, some lockers have special features such as temperature controls that provide for refrigeration or heating of the locker contents. Each set of lockers includes a console having a keypad at which a customer can enter a locker identification code and an access code.

Each locker has an electronic lock that preferably is controlled by the primary
10 computer via the satellite computer at the service center where the lock is located. In particular, the primary computer can establish an access code comprising a sequence of numbers or other keypad characters that must be entered at the keypad before a specific locker can be opened. Upon detecting that a locker has been opened and its contents removed, the primary computer can then cancel the number or other
15 characters that were used to open that locker. Further details about the operation of such electronic locks are set forth in U.S. Patents 5,886,644 and 5,894,277 which are incorporated herein by reference.

Advantageously, management system 30 facilitates product orders, tracks ordered products and arranges for their delivery by repeated communications with
20 vendors of the products and with the customers who ordered the products. Preferably, this communication is accomplished through the Internet, which is depicted in Fig. 2 as element 100. Customers may access the Internet in a variety of ways. Illustratively they do so through personal computers 111, 112, 113, 114, that are connected to the Internet via portals 121, 122 such as those provided by America
25 Online or Yahoo.

Customers can order products via the Internet by directly accessing web sites maintained by vendors. Two such sites 131, 132 are depicted in Fig. 2. Preferably, however, the access is made by accessing a web site 135 maintained by the management systems 30 and either ordering products from web-site 135 or
30 connecting to the vendor site using a link maintained at web site 135.

The preferred process for ordering and delivery of a product is shown in the flowchart of Fig. 4. The flow chart depicts actions taken by a customer, management

system 30 and a vendor and the communication among them while ordering and delivering a product. The system is particularly suitable for use with a dedicated class of customers. For example, the method can be used with a dedicated class of customers consisting of individuals who are employed in large office towers in urban centers. Typically, individuals of this class exhibit characteristics which are particularly suitable for enhancing the purchasing power associated with Internet purchases. These individuals likely have higher incomes and common interests. This enables the operator of the management system to obtain products and services from preferred suppliers at preferential rates to those offered to other purchasers of those products and services and increases the likelihood of those vendors participating as vendors on the system. The operator may also offer for sale products or services that are particularly suitable for the particular class of purchasers. The system is particularly useful where the distribution and service center is located close to the physical location of the dedicated class of customers. For example, the dedicated pick up destination could be located in or near common areas of those office towers readily accessed by said individuals. The proximity of the dedicated class of customers to the pick up destination enables the operator of the management system to make available to its customers products and services uniquely suitable for those customers at preferred rates and at a convenient location for pickup. The synergies associated with the methods of the present invention are facilitated by the use of the Internet based management system and delivery location.

The product may be delivered to the customer at the pick up area by way of a secured storage area which may consist of a plurality of lockers or boxes bearing a unique identification code. The product in the locker or box may be accessed through the use of a lock mechanism such as a mechanical lock accessed by a key provided to the customer at the dedicated pick up area or an electro mechanical lock accessed by a resettable access code, the resettable access code and the locker or box identification code being provided to the customer via the Internet.

For purposes of this description, it is assumed that the customer is known to the management system because he or she has previously registered with the management system. Typically, as part of the registration process, the customer will supply suitable identification, establish a credit reference by means of a credit card,

select a service center for delivery of products, establish a password or personal identification number (PIN) for use with his or her name, and provide an email address through which he or she may be contacted. Within the primary computer, this information will be associated with a unique customer identification number.

5 The process begins at step 210 when a customer accesses the management system web-site to initiate purchase of a product. The management system web-site includes links to the web sites of vendors who have subscribed to the delivery services offered by the management system. The customer selects the link to the vendor who provides the product he is seeking and thereby access the vendor's web-
10 site as at step 212. From the vendor's web-site, the customer obtains the web page or pages needed to select and order the product.

 The customer then selects and orders the product at step 214. Typically, this involves scanning numerous web pages of product description to find the product sought, selecting the product and then completing an order form. Typically, the order
15 form provides blanks at which the customer is asked to submit such ordering information as payment details and shipping information including the address to which the product is to be delivered. Much of this information can be specified by the customer at the time he registers with the management system. This pre-specified information can be supplied to the vendor in step 214 in a variety of ways. One
20 presently popular method is to embed the information in a cookie that is stored on the customer's computer and is only made available to the vendor for purposes of purchasing products. Alternatively, this information can be provided by use of an electronic wallet such as the Microsoft Password (TM) system. If necessary, the customer can enter the needed information himself via a computer at the time he
25 enters his order. For example, he may wish to have the ordered product delivered to a destination that is different from that already on record.

 Alternatively, the customer may order from a web-site maintained by the management system in which the management system will communicate the order to the vendor.

30 Following submission of the order, the vendor confirms the order to the customer. This step, which typically is performed by email via the Internet, is represented by step 216. The confirmation includes a unique order number.

In the present invention, the notification of confirmation also goes via email to management system 30 where a file is created at step 218 relating to the order. This file identifies the product to be shipped, the vendor, the customer and the destination to which the product is to be shipped. In general, this is done by associating the order
5 number with the customer identification number and the information previously stored in association with that customer number.

When the product is finally ready for shipment, the vendor ships the order and confirms its shipment at step 220. Again, the confirmation goes by email via the Internet to both the customer and management system 30. At step 222, the
10 management system updates its file on the order so that it can monitor the shipment and initiate a trace for the shipment if it does not arrive when expected.

When the order is received at the service center, management system 30 selects a locker, sets the access code for the locker and notifies the customer by email via the Internet of the identification code for the locker from which the customer can
15 obtain the product ordered. Preferably, these tasks are performed by the primary computer. Personnel at the service center place the product in the locker selected by the management system. These activities are represented by step 224. Typically, the access code is the personal identification number (PIN) established by the customer at the time he or she registered with the management system.

20 At his or her convenience, the customer can then retrieve the product from the locker at step 226 by going to the service center to which the product was delivered and entering at the keypad the locker identification code that the management system provided at step 224 and the access code (the PIN) established at the time of registration.

25 The storage locker is monitored to determine when the product is removed from the locker. This can be done by sensing when the door of the locker is opened or sensing whether something remains in the locker. When a signal is received from the locker indicating that the product has been removed, the management system at step 228 clears the access code previously set for that locker, notes delivery of the
30 product in the tracking file established at step 218 and closes the tracking file.

Further details of the operation of various steps of the invention are set forth in the flow charts of Figs. 5-1 through 5-15.

Fig. 5-1 depicts the processing of products that are received at a service center 70. As indicated, a received consignment is checked for exceptions, any exceptions are resolved to the extent possible, and the accepted consignments are logged in at step 1L.

5 Fig. 5-2 depicts the processing of a consignment. The consignment is broken down at step 2A into individual orders. Problems and returns are segregated at step 2B and processed appropriately. Clean orders are consolidated at step 2G if appropriate and staged for receiving. If the order is to be refrigerated, that is done.

10 Figs. 5-3 through 5-6 depict the order handling process. In Fig. 5-3, each received product is matched, if possible, with a specific order that has been forwarded by the management system; and the customer identification number (EMPORI ID#) associated with the order is determined. In Fig. 5-5, a search is made for other orders for the same customer that might be awaiting delivery at the service center. If possible, all orders for the same customer are consolidated.

15 In Fig. 5-6, a determination is made at step 6B whether a locker is needed to store the received product. Availability of such a locker is determined at step 6C and the product is stored in the locker at step 6D if it is available. Otherwise, it is held in secondary storage. The record of the order is then updated with the identification code (LOCKER #) for the locker and the management system is updated so as to
20 associate that locker identification code with the customer. The management system uses the customer identification to retrieve the customer's PIN number and sets the access code of the electronic lock for the locker to equal the customer's PIN number. The management system also sends an e-mail at step 6G to the customer notifying him or her of the arrival of the product at the service center and the identification code
25 for the locker where the customer's product is stored.

Fig. 5-7 depicts the pick-up process. If the product is stored in a locker, the customer can obtain the product by entering his or her PIN number and the locker identification code at a keypad at the service center or on the locker itself. Otherwise, customer service is available.

30 Figs. 5-8 through 5-13 depict the provision of personal service at the service center for the delivery of products or the resolution of problems.

Fig. 5-9 depicts the processing of a return. If a return is determined to be

possible at step 9C, the return is processed at step 9D and a return material authorization (RMA) is prepared.

Fig. 5-10 depicts the tracking of an order. Fig. 5-11 depicts the procedure for handling misdirected orders and Fig. 5-12 depicts the procedure for handling orders
5 that are not found in the system. Fig. 5-13 depicts the processing of orders that are found to have problems such as overages, shortages or damage.

Fig. 5-14 depicts the process for returning orders that are found in lockers. If the order is rejected by a customer, it is returned. If the order was somehow overlooked, a new order is created and the product is re-entered into the order
10 processing sequence. And in some cases, the decision may be made to dispose of the order.

Finally, Fig. 5-15 depicts the process for assembling returns for pick up from the service center by the delivery service.

As will be apparent to those skilled in the art, numerous variations may be
15 made in the above-identified process within the spirit and scope of the invention. For example, while the use of electronic locks controlled by the management system is preferred, the invention may also be practiced using other systems to provide package security. Mechanical locks could be used on storage lockers, each with a unique combination known only to one customer or a unique key held only by one customer.

20 Different arrangements can be used for ordering the goods or for payment for the goods ordered. For example, as indicated above, the goods could be ordered through a web-site maintained by the vendor or one maintained by the management system. In the case where the management system receives the order from a customer, it is necessary to notify the vendor of the order for goods. Preferably, the
25 management system does this by forwarding the customer's order to the vendor via the Internet. The products could be paid for at the service center using a credit card reader, thereby alleviating concerns about making credit card transactions over the Internet. In such circumstances, payment might be made to the legal entity that operates the management system and that entity would then pay the vendor; or the
30 management system could be programmed to use the order information to forward the payment directly to the vendor. Alternatively, payments could be made by cash or check to service personnel at the service center and the legal entity that operates the

management system could then pay the vendor.

Different arrangements can be made for confirming and tracking the order. For example, rather than have the vendor confirm the order to both the management system and the customer, the vendor could confirm the order to the management
5 system and the management system could confirm the order to the customer. Likewise, confirmation of shipment could be done the same way.

While the invention has been described using the example of delivery of a product, the invention may also be used to facilitate the delivery of services. For example, the service center could also provide concierge services such as theater
10 tickets and the like and use the email messaging capability of the management system to confirm ticket orders and/or the storage lockers to deliver tickets. Likewise, the service centers could receive clothes for laundry services and return them using an email message to identify a storage locker where the clean clothes could be picked up. Similarly, a car could be left at a service center for repair work by leaving the keys in
15 a pre-specified storage locker and the car could be returned by using an email message to identify a storage locker where the keys could be returned.

Numerous other applications will be apparent to those skilled in the art.

Claims

1. A method for distributing products comprising the steps of:
receiving from a vendor order information comprising identification of a customer, identification of a product that has been ordered, and identification of a destination to which the product is to be shipped;
receiving the ordered product at the destination;
placing the ordered product in a secure storage area at the destination that bears a unique identification code; and
notifying the customer that the order product is available at the secure storage area that bears the unique identification code.
2. The method of claim 1 wherein the secure storage area is protected by an electronic lock having a resettable access code further comprising the step of changing the access code on the electronic lock after the ordered product is removed from the secure storage area.
3. The method of claim 2 wherein the customer has a personal identification number further comprising the step of using the customer's personal identification number as the access code on the electronic lock.
4. A method for distributing products comprising the steps of:
receiving from a vendor order information comprising identification of a customer, identification of a product that has been ordered, and identification of a destination to which the product is to be shipped;
placing the ordered product in a secure storage area at the destination that is protected by an electronic lock having a first resettable access code;
notifying the customer that the ordered product is available at the secure storage area; and
changing the access code on the electronic lock after the ordered product is removed from the secure storage area.

5. The method of claim 4 wherein the secure storage area comprises a plurality of lockers each of which bears a unique identification code and the step of placing the ordered product in the secure storage area comprises the step of placing the ordered product in a specific locker and the step of notifying the customer further comprises the step of notifying the customer of the identification code of the locker in which the ordered product is placed.

6. The method of claim 5 wherein the customer is identified by an identification code further comprising the step of releasing the electronic lock upon entry of the customer identification code and the locker identification code.

7. A method for distributing products comprising the steps of:
providing to a customer via the Internet an order entry display;
receiving from the customer via the order entry display an order for a product along with payment and delivery information, the delivery information specifying delivery to a selected destination;
receiving the ordered product at the destination;
placing the ordered product in a secure storage area at the destination that is protected by an electronic lock having a first resettable access code; and
notifying the customer that the ordered product is available at the secure storage area.

8. The method of claim 7 wherein the secure storage area comprises a plurality of lockers each of which bears a unique identification code and the step of placing the ordered product in the secure storage area comprises the step of placing the ordered product in a specific locker and the step of notifying the customer further comprises the step of notifying the customer of the identification code of the locker in which the ordered product is placed.

9. The method of claim 8 wherein the customer is identified by an identification code further comprising the step of releasing the electronic lock upon entry of the customer identification code and the locker identification code.

10. A method for distributing products comprising the steps of:
 - providing to a customer via the Internet an order entry display;
 - receiving from the customer via the order entry display an order for a product along with payment and delivery information, the delivery information specifying delivery to a selected destination;
 - receiving the ordered product at the destination;
 - placing the ordered product in a secure storage area at the destination that bears a unique identification code; and
 - notifying the customer that the ordered product is available at the secure storage area that bears the unique identification code.
11. The method of claim 10 wherein the secure storage area is protected by an electronic lock having a resettable access code further comprising the step of changing the access code on the electronic lock after the ordered product is removed from the secure storage area.
12. The method of claim 10 wherein the customer has a personal identification number further comprising the step of using the customer's personal identification number as the access code on the electronic lock.
13. A method for purchasing and distributing products comprising the steps of:
 - providing an Internet based web site for the sale and distribution of products, said web site containing an order entry display to be accessed by a dedicated class of customers;
 - providing a dedicated pick up destination for products ordered via the order entry display located in close physical proximity to said class of customers;
 - receiving from a customer which is a member of said class of customers via the order entry display product order information including an identification of product and dedicated pick up destination;
 - notifying the vendor via the Internet of the order information;

receiving the ordered product from the vendor at the dedicated pick up destination;

notifying the customer via the Internet that the ordered product is available for pick up at the dedicated pick up destination; and

facilitating the delivery of the product to the customer at said destination.

14. The method of claim 13 where the dedicated class of customers consists of individuals who are employed in large office towers in urban centers and said dedicated pick up destinations are located in or near common areas of those office towers readily accessed by said individuals.

15. The method of claim 13 where payment is received from the customer and then made to the vendor.

16. The method of claim 13 where payment is made directly from the customer to the vendor.

17. The method of claim 13 where the delivery of product to the customer at the dedicated pick up location is facilitated by the provision of a secure storage area.

18. The method of claim 17 where the secured storage area consists of a plurality of lockers or boxes bearing a unique identification code.

19. The method of claim 18 where the ordered product is placed in one of the plurality of lockers or boxes.

20. The method of claim 19 where the product in the locker or box is accessed through the use of a lock mechanism.

21. The method of claim 20 where the lock mechanism is a mechanical

lock accessed by a key provided to the customer at the dedicated pick up area.

22. The method of claim 20 where the lock mechanism is an electro mechanical lock accessed by a resettable access code, the resettable access code and the locker or box identification code being provided to the customer via the Internet.

23. The method of the claim 20 where the lock mechanism is a electro mechanical lock accessed by a resettable access code provided to the customer at the dedicated pick up area.

24. The methods of claim 23 where the resettable access code of the locker or box is changed after the ordered product is removed from the secure storage area.

25. The method of claim 23 where the resettable access code is a personal identification number set for the customer.

26. A method for purchasing and distributing products comprising the steps of:

providing an Internet based web site for the sale and distribution of products, said web site containing an order entry display to be accessed by a dedicated class of customers;

providing a dedicated pick up destination for products ordered via the order entry display located in close physical proximity to said class of customers;

facilitating through said web site the delivery directly to vendors of order entry display product order information including an identification of product and dedicated pick up destination;

receiving the ordered product from the vendor at the dedicated pick up destination;

notifying the customer via the Internet that the ordered product is available for pick up at the dedicated pick up destination; and

facilitating the delivery of the product to the customer at said

destination.

27. A method for purchasing services comprising the steps of:
 - providing an Internet based web site for the sale of services, said web site containing an order entry display to be accessed by a dedicated class of customers;
 - providing a dedicated pick up destination for features of that service ordered via the order entry display located in close physical proximity to said class of customers;
 - receiving from a customer which is a member of said class of customers via the order entry display service order information including an identification of service and dedicated pick up destination;
 - notifying the vendor via the Internet of the order information;
 - receiving a feature of the ordered service from the vendor at the dedicated pick up destination; and
 - notifying the customer via the Internet that the feature of the ordered services is available for pick up at the dedicated pick up destination.

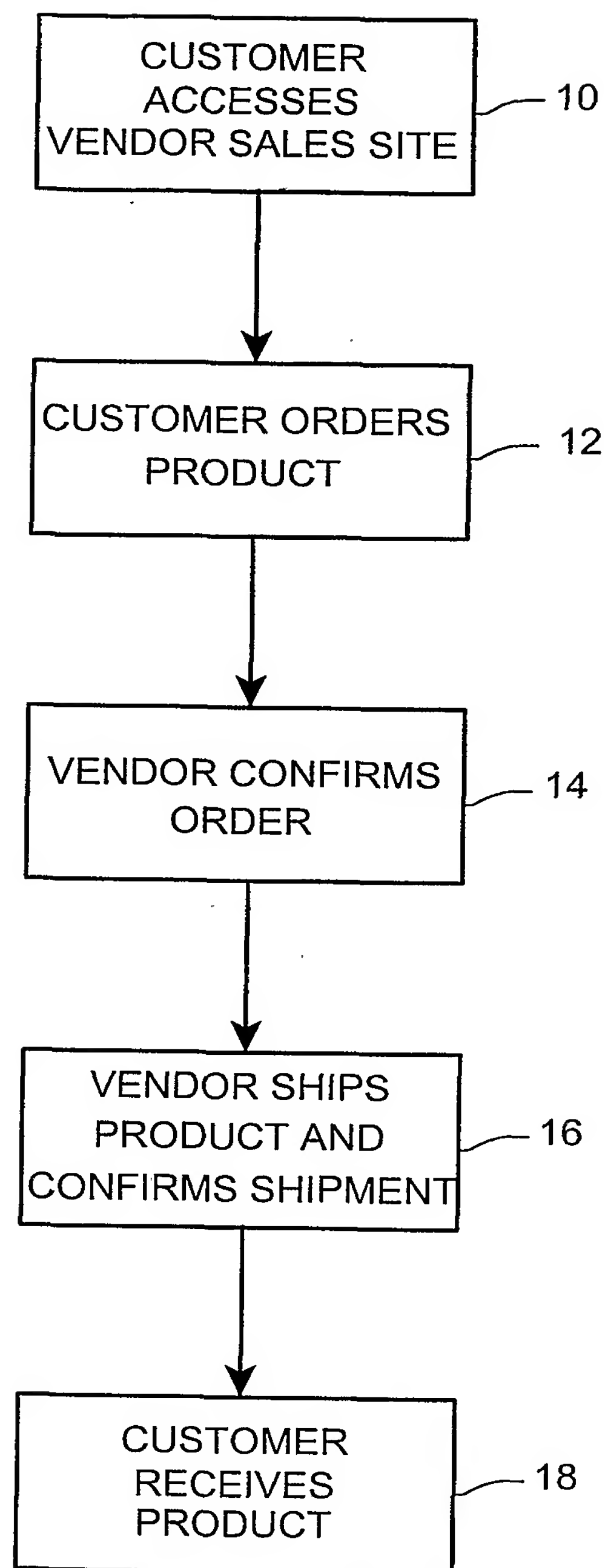
1/19

FIG. 1
(Prior Art)

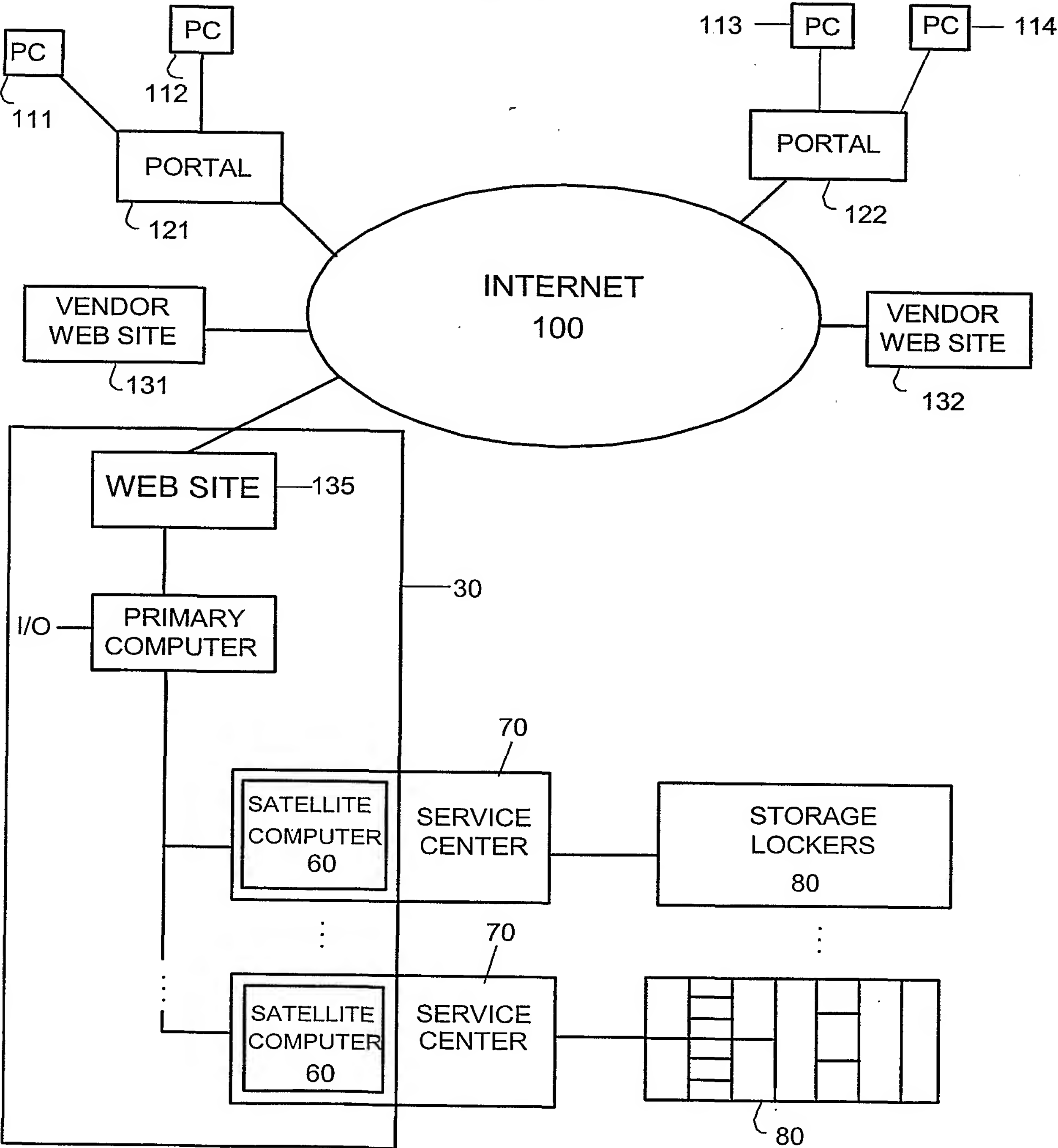


FIG. 2

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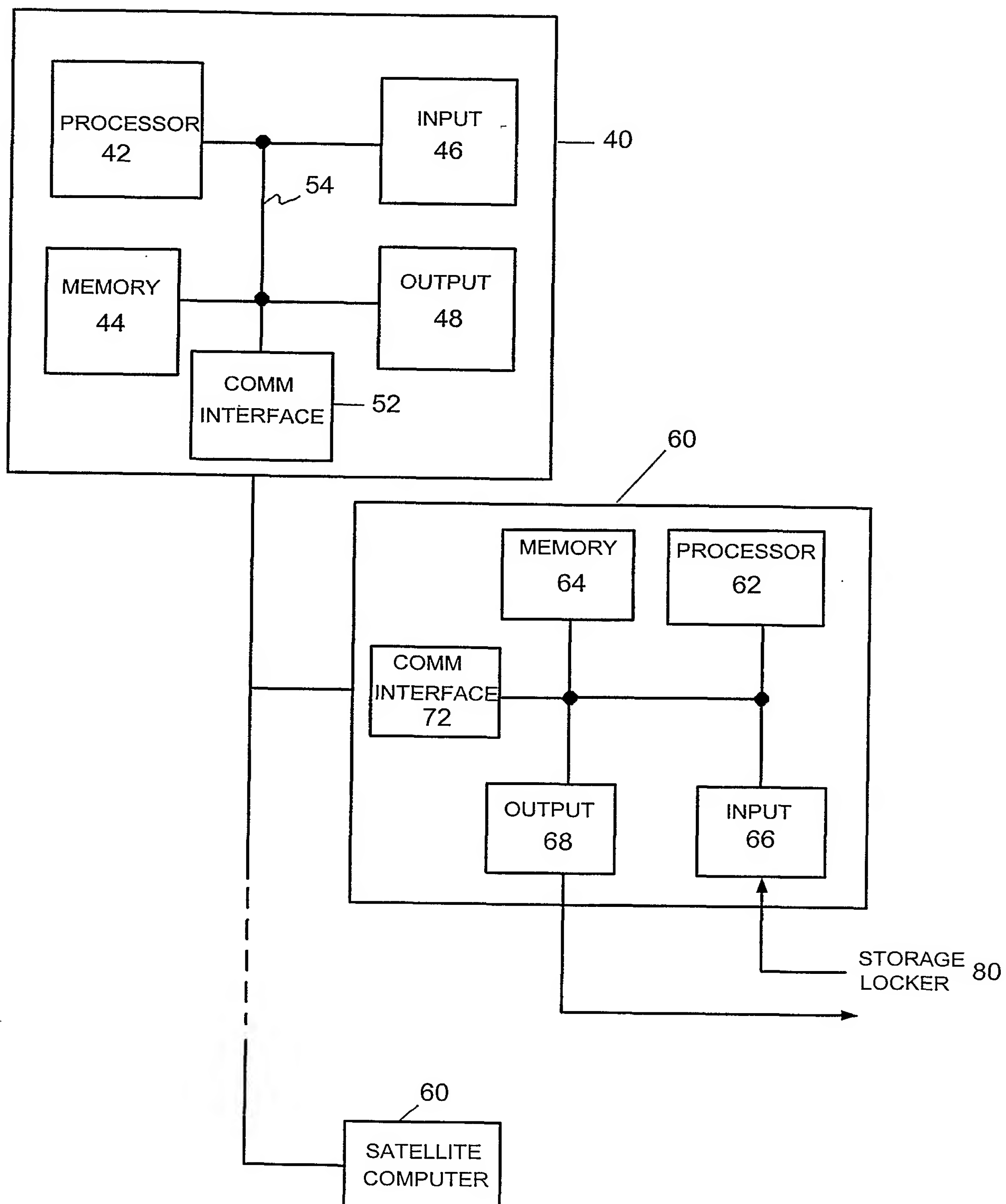


FIG. 3

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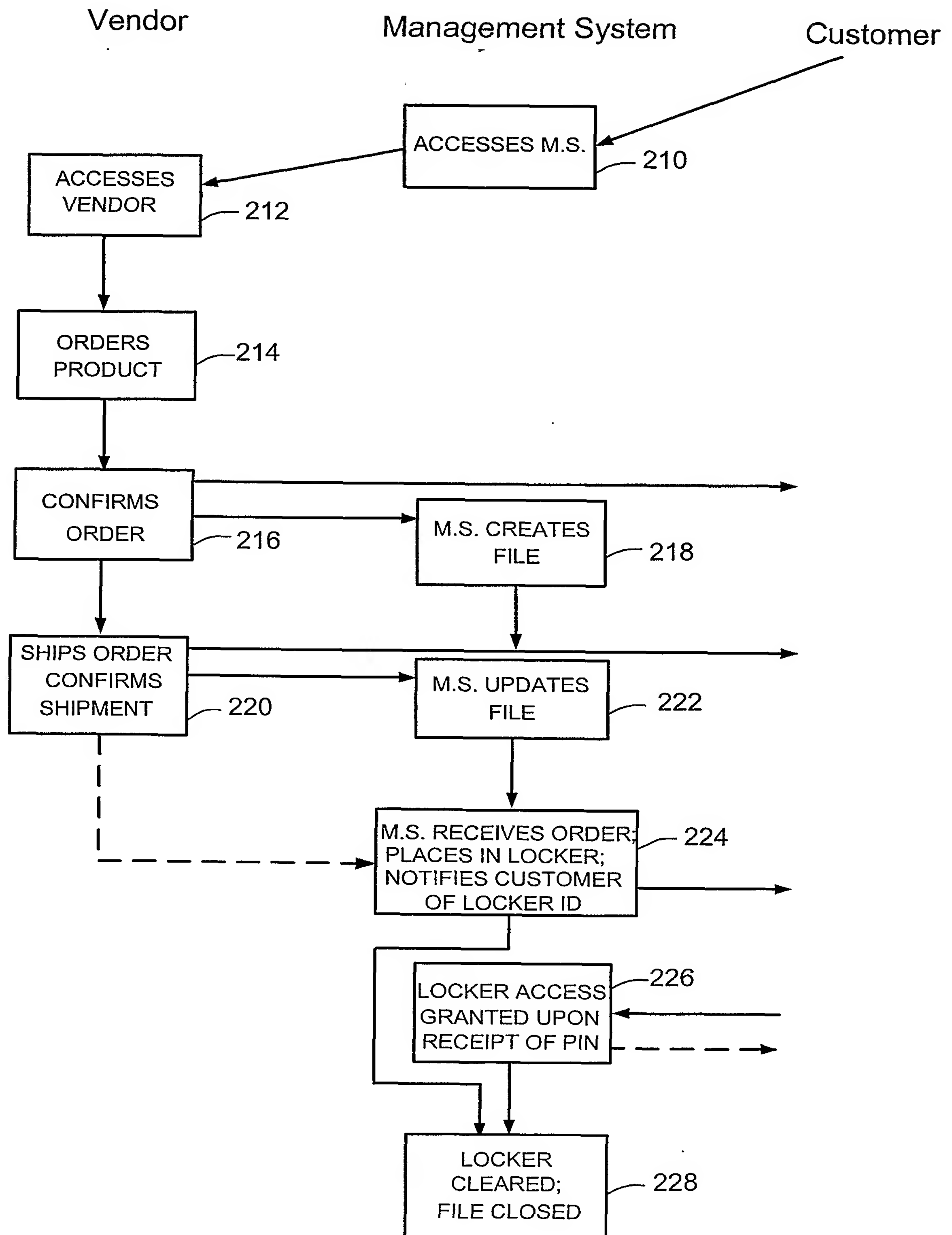


FIG. 4

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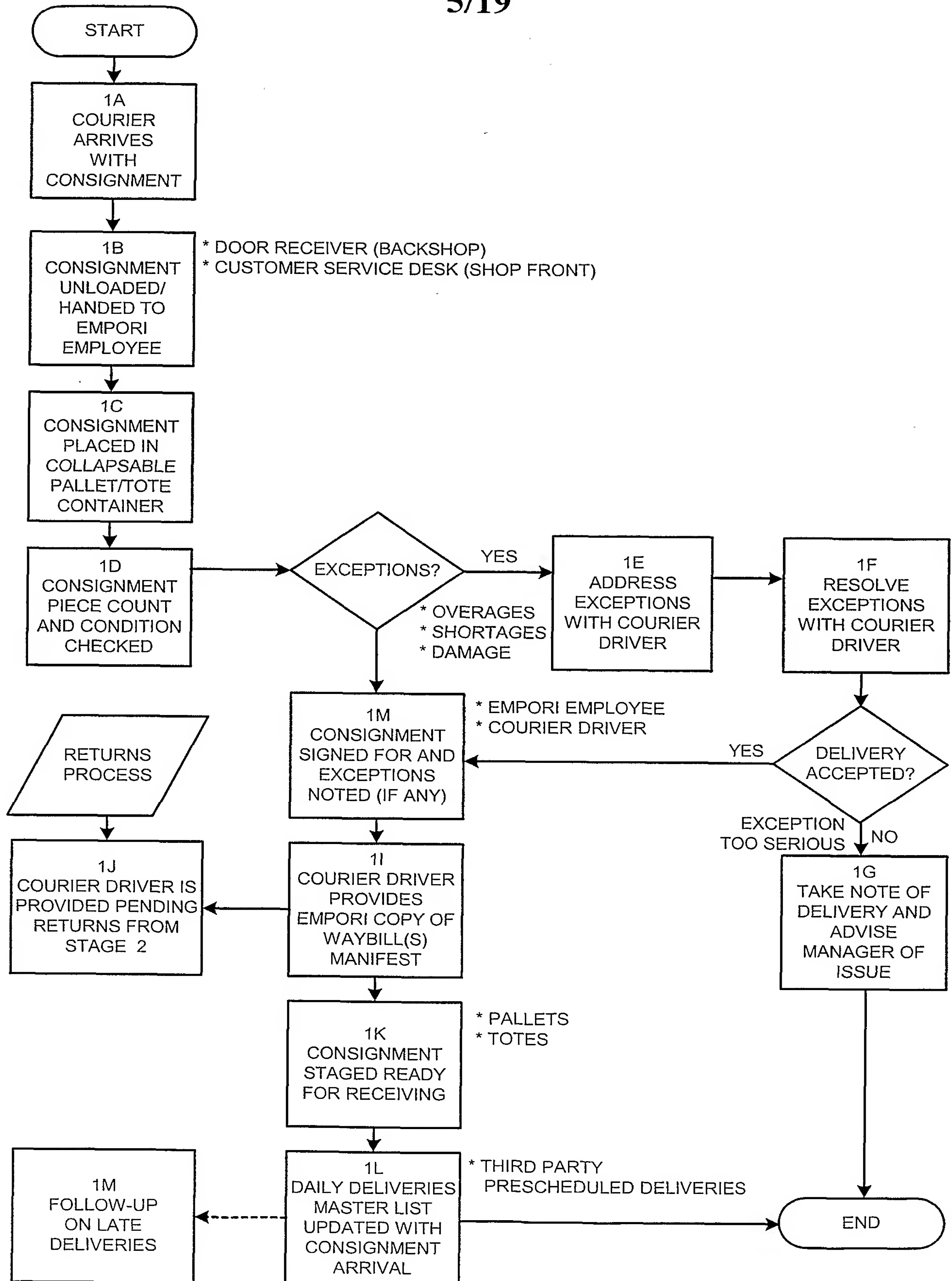


FIG. 5-1

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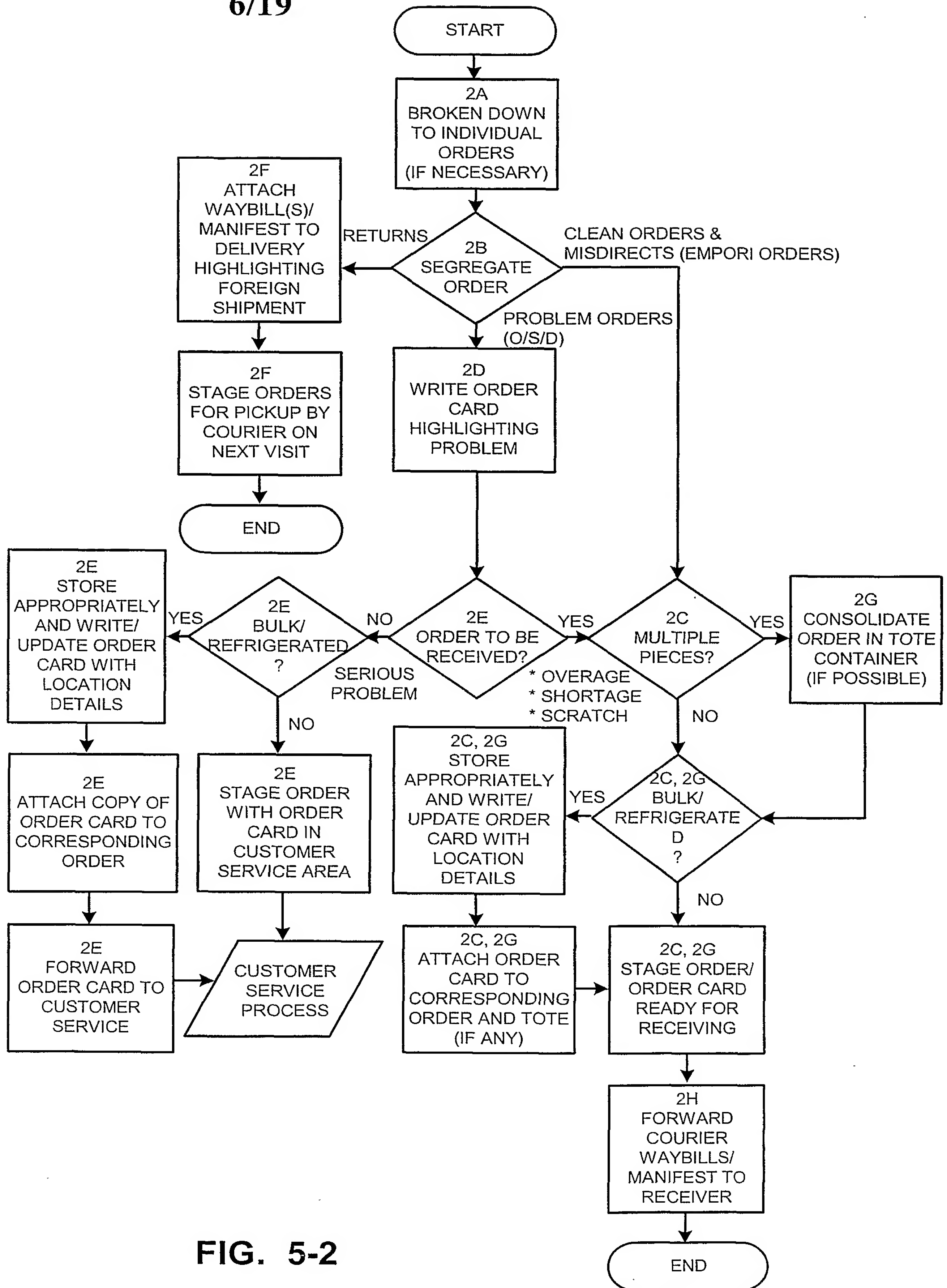


FIG. 5-2

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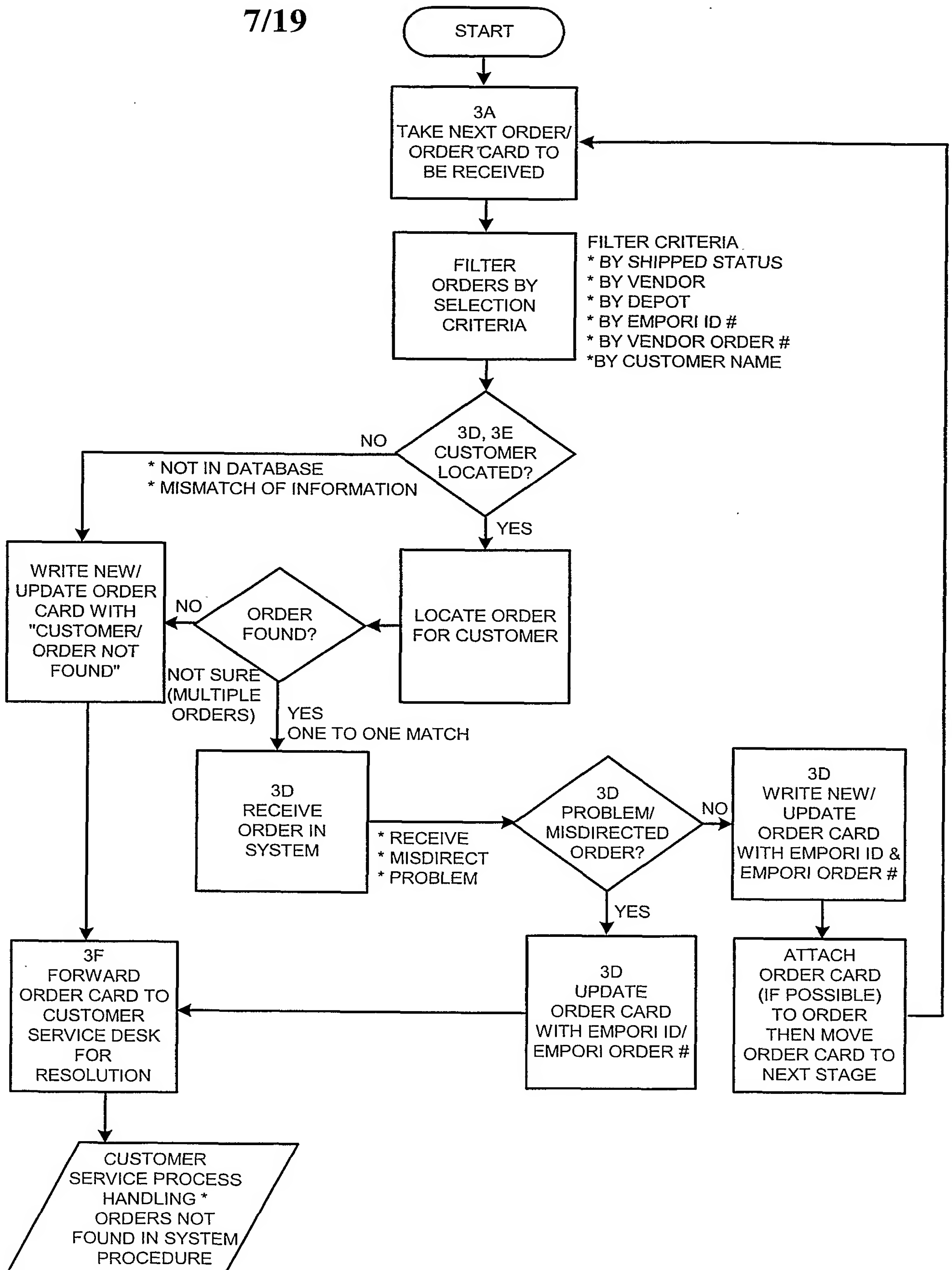


FIG. 5-3

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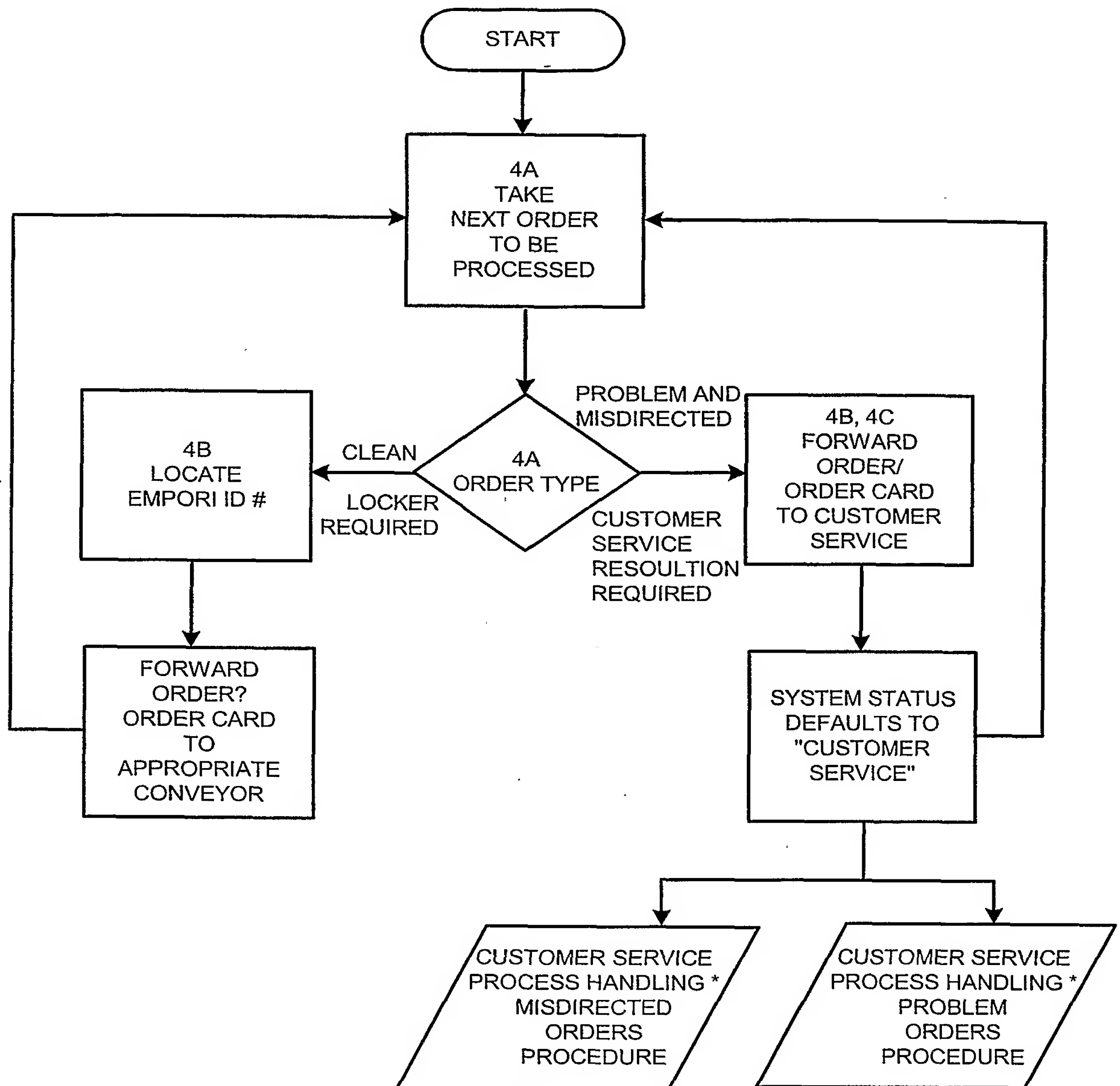


FIG. 5-4

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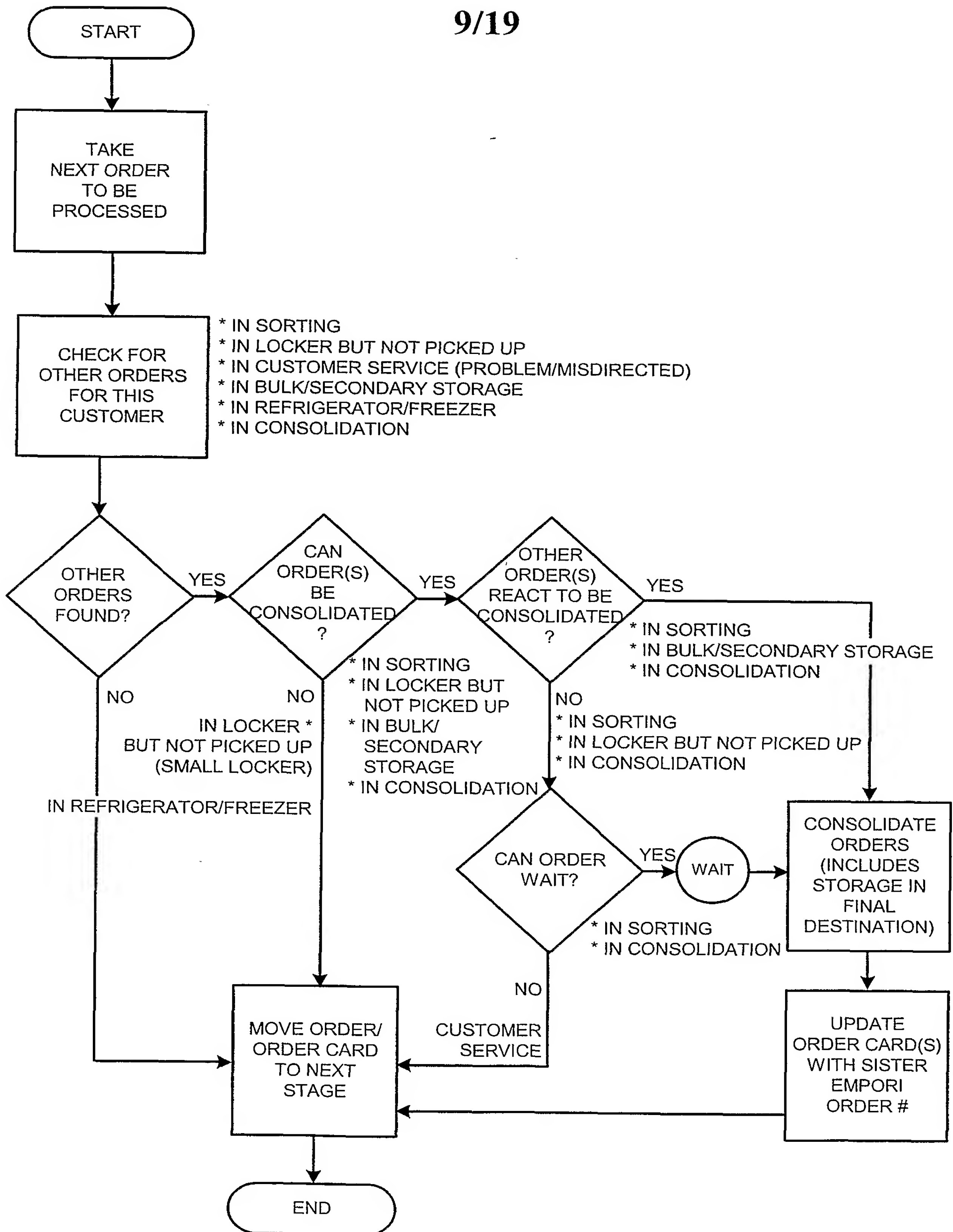


FIG. 5-5

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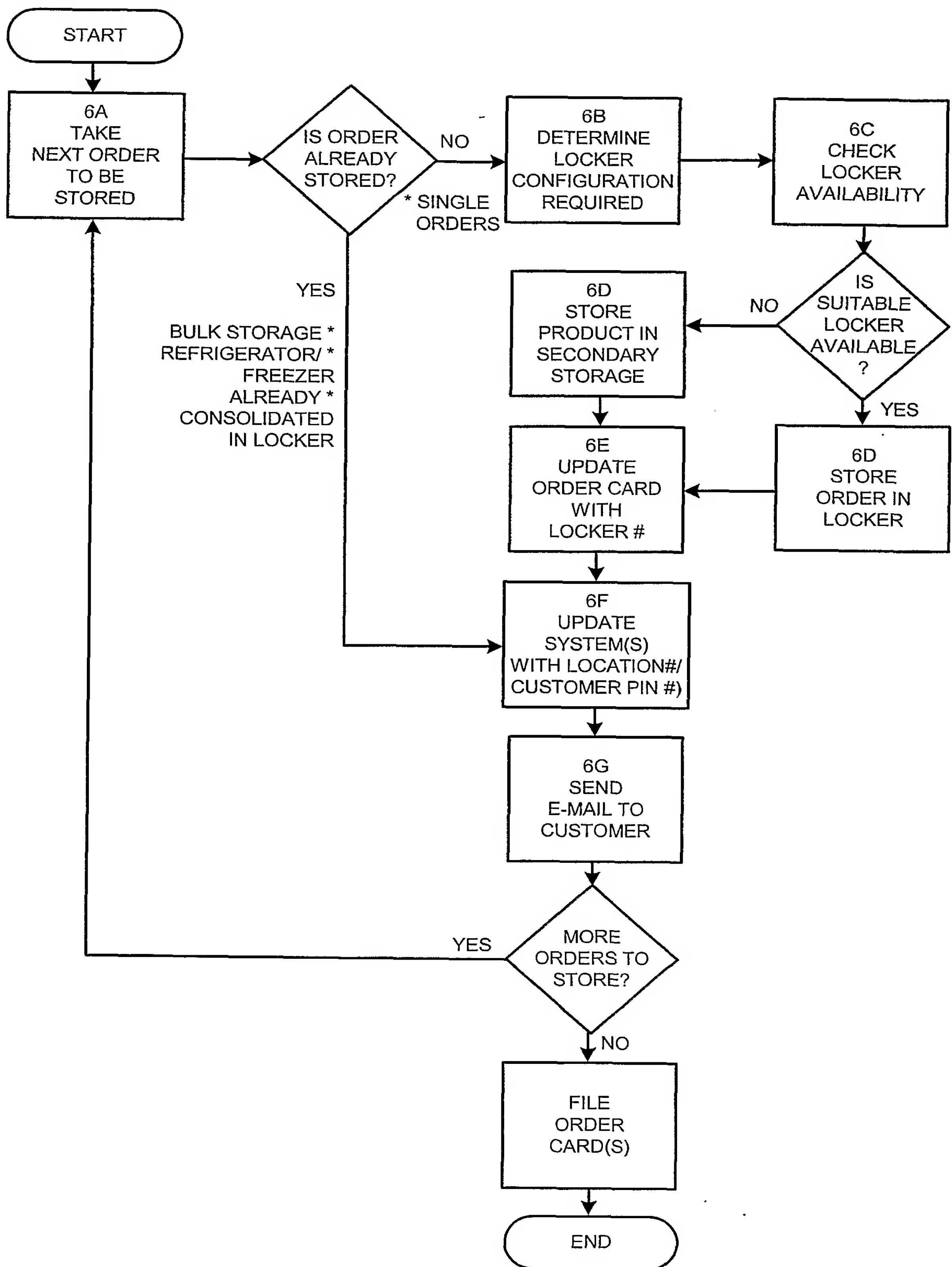


FIG. 5-6

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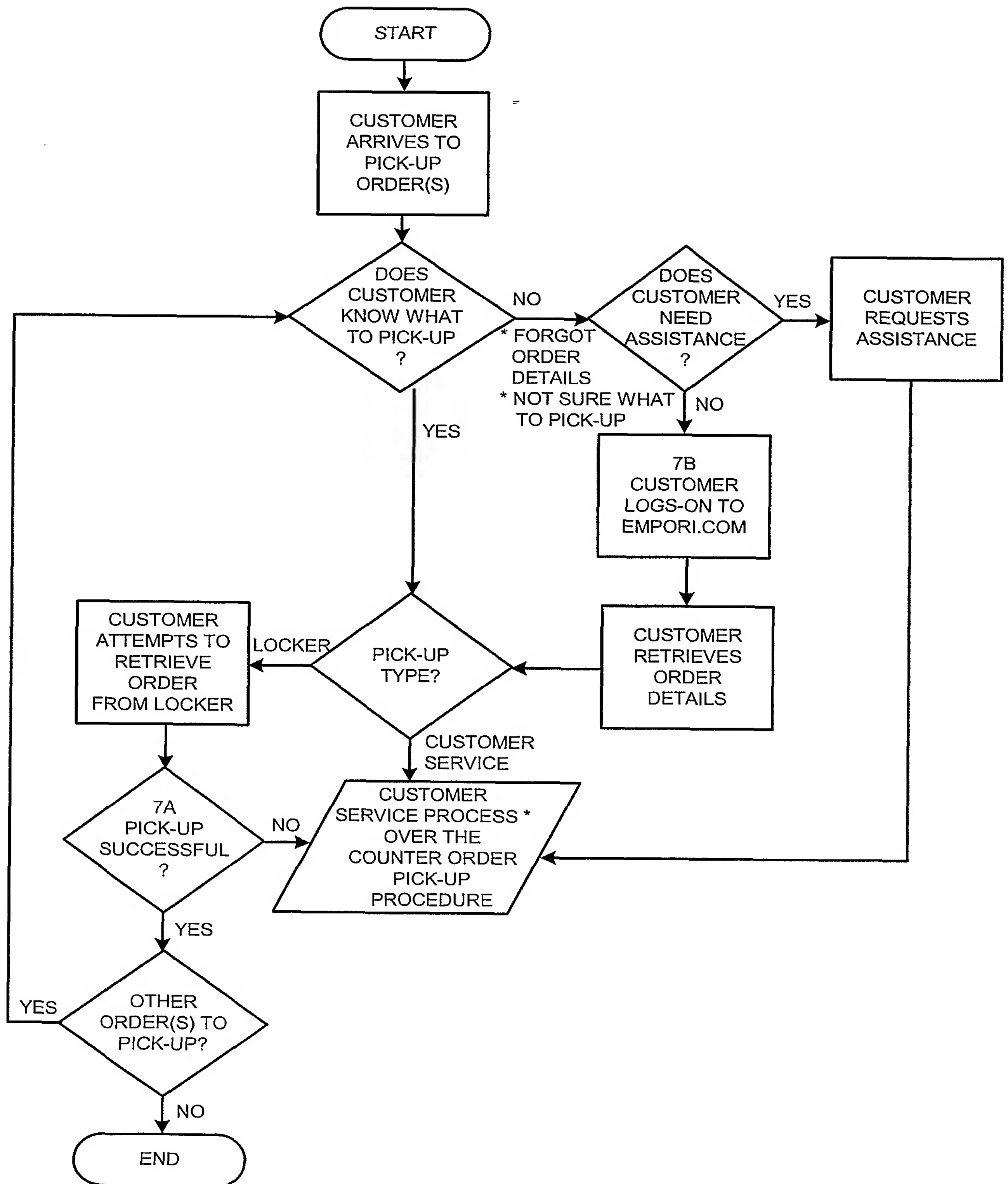


FIG. 5-7

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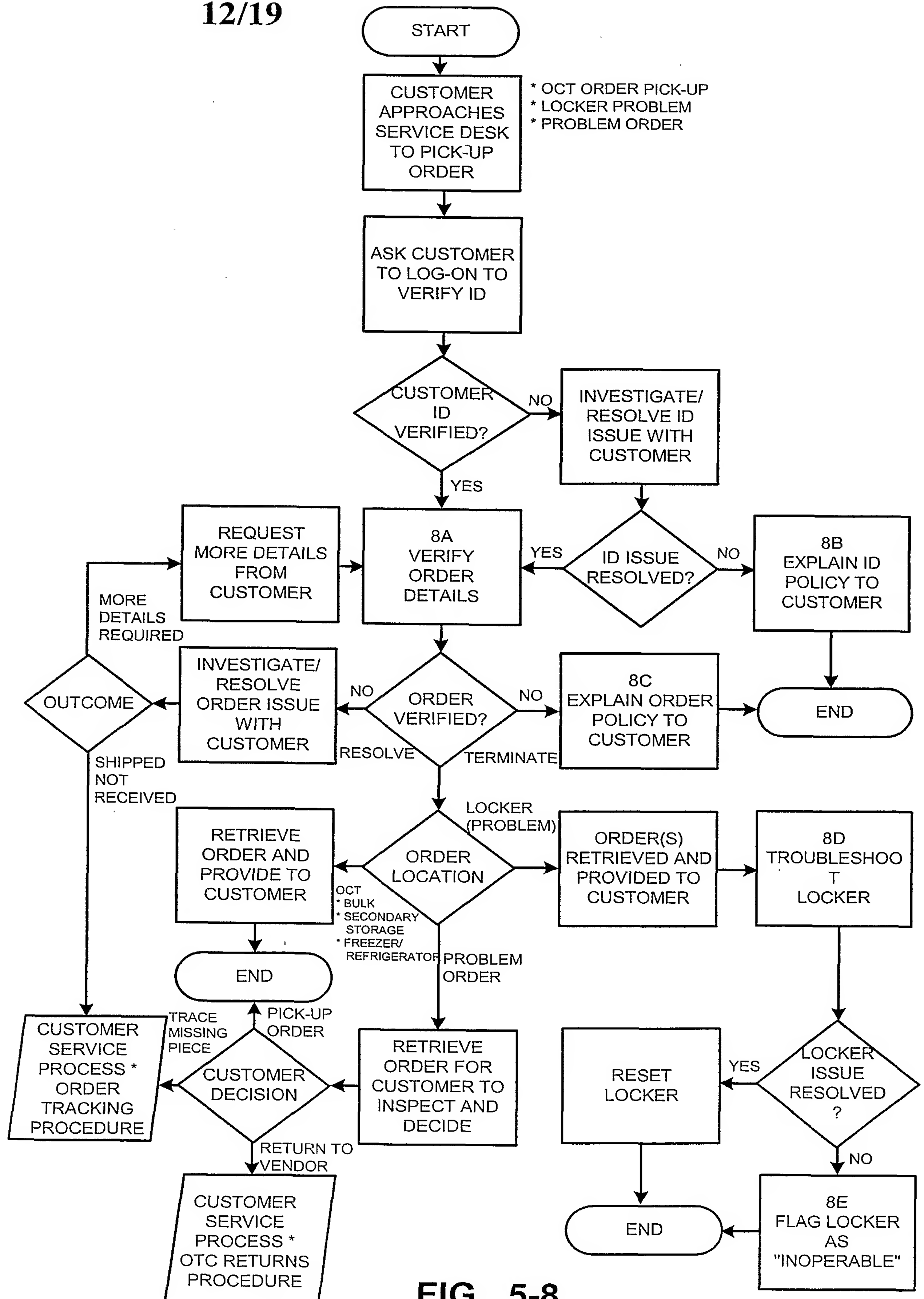


FIG. 5-8

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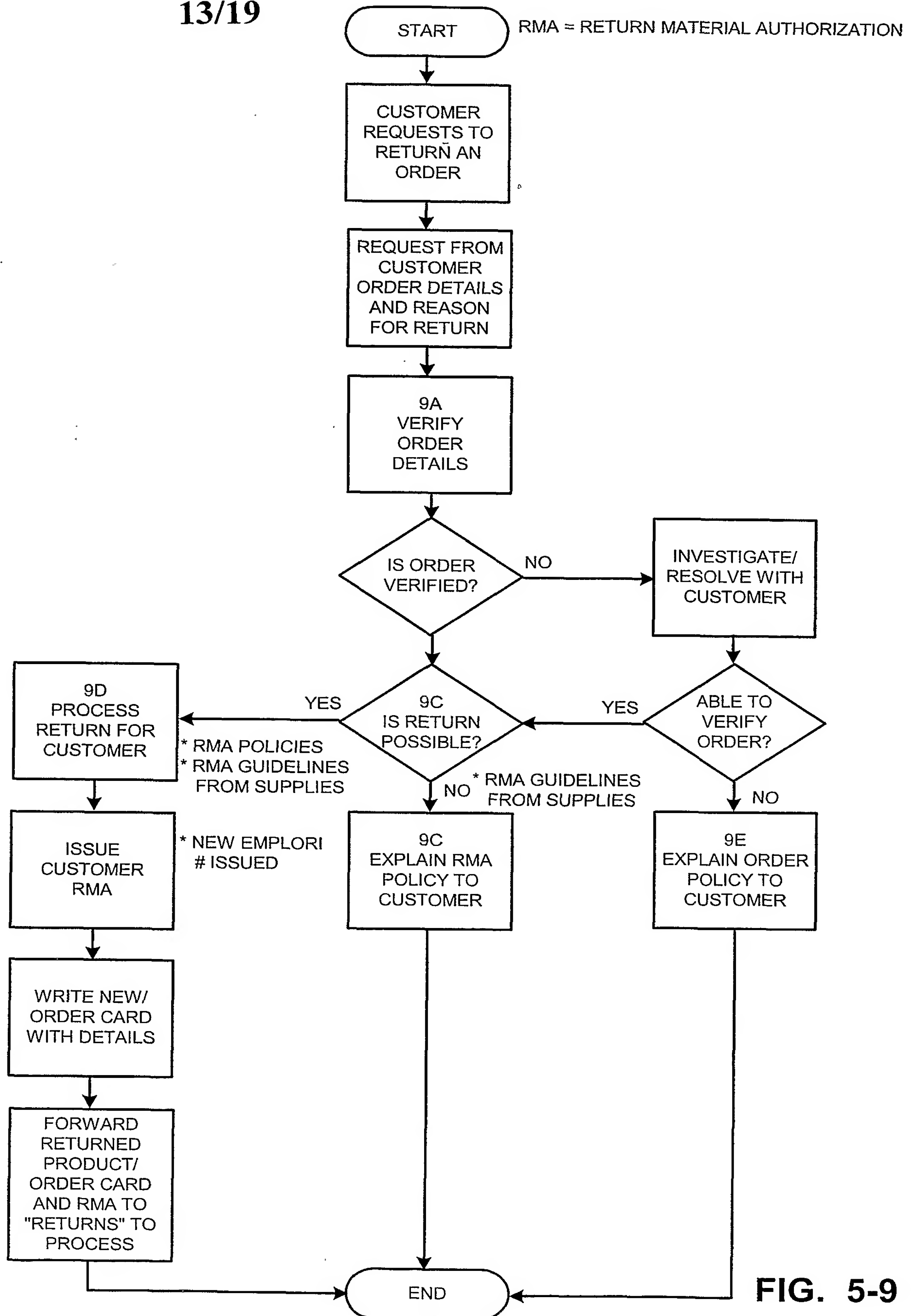
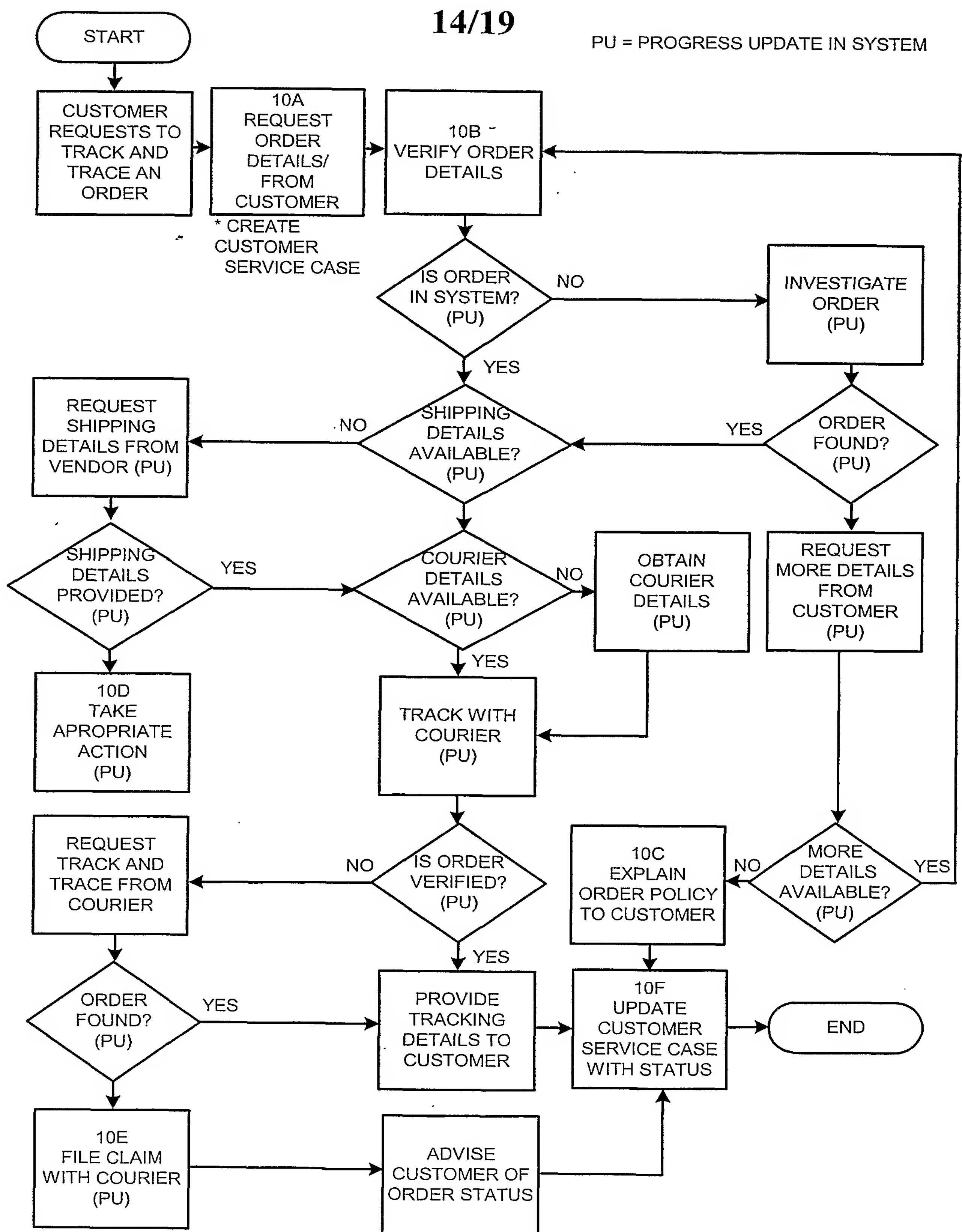


FIG. 5-9

**FIG. 5-10**

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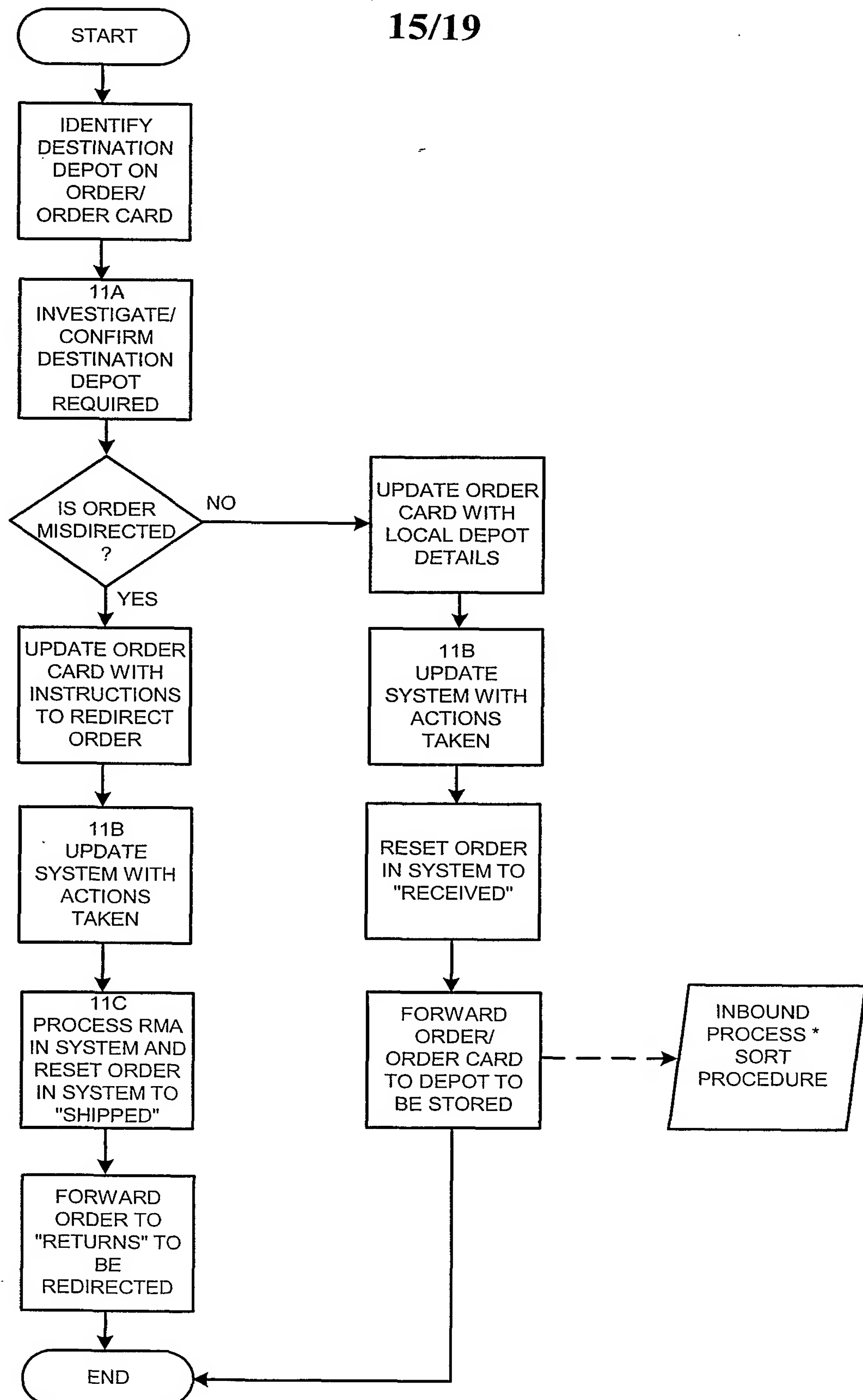


FIG. 5-11

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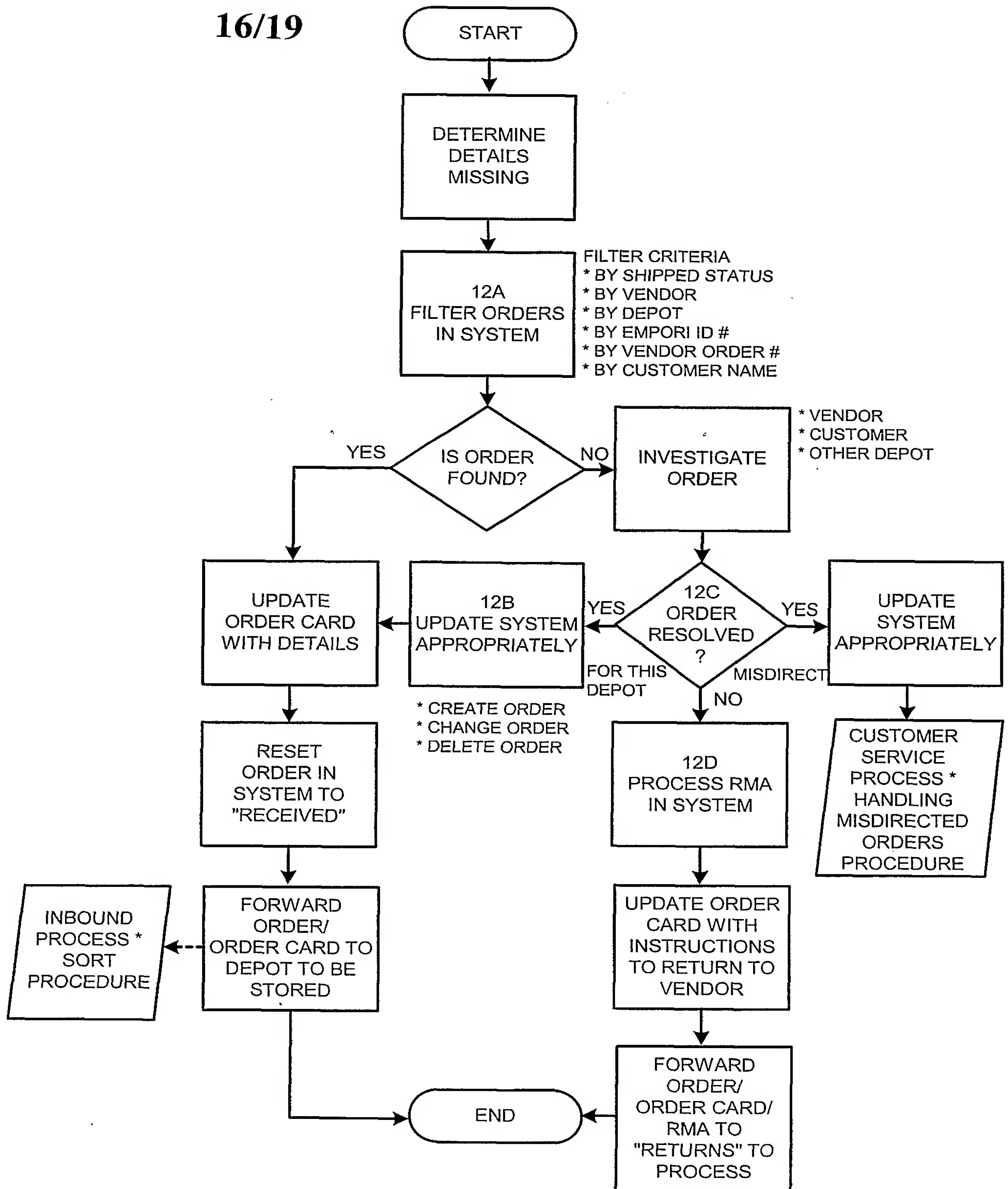


FIG. 5-12

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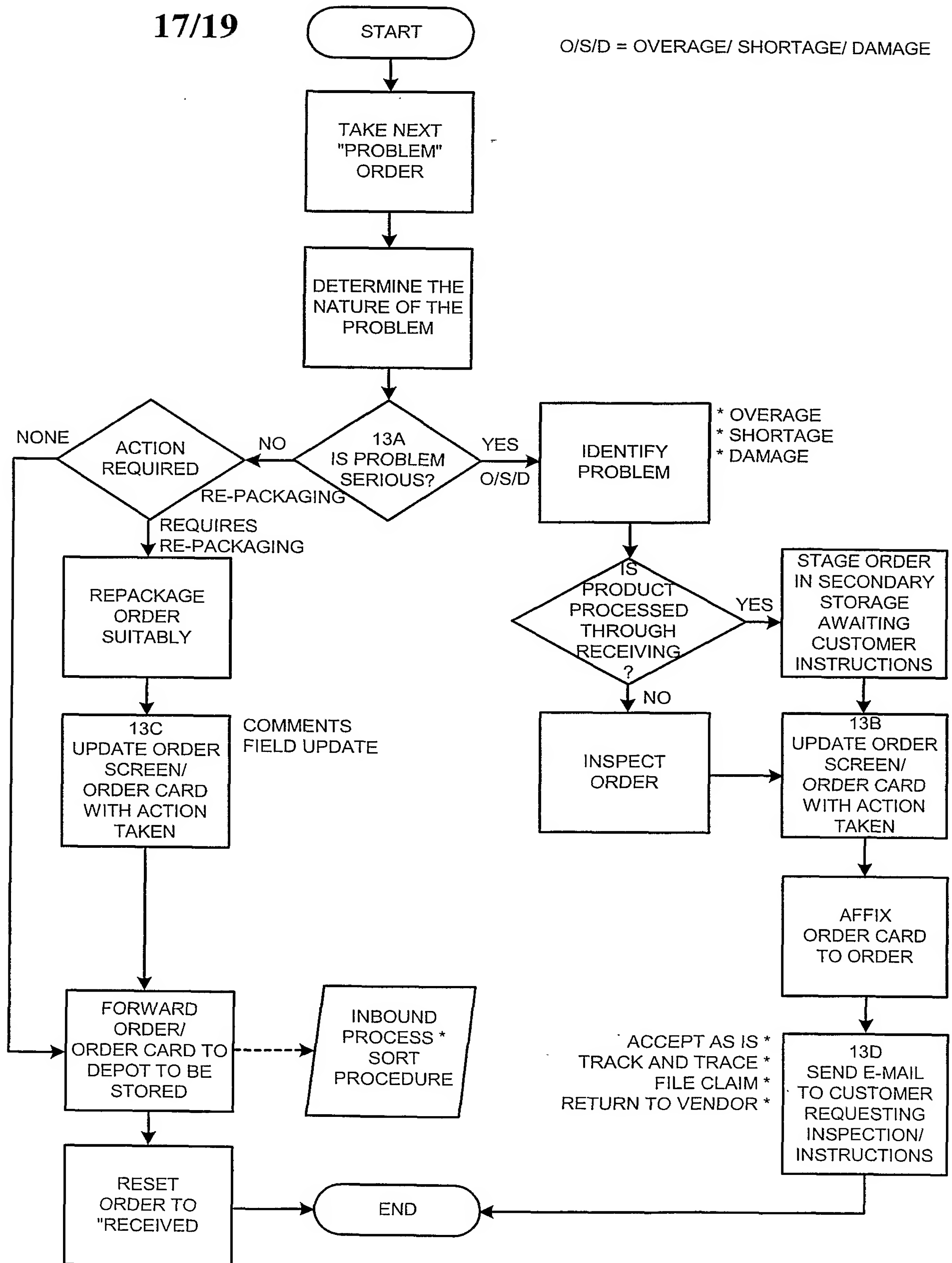


FIG. 5-13

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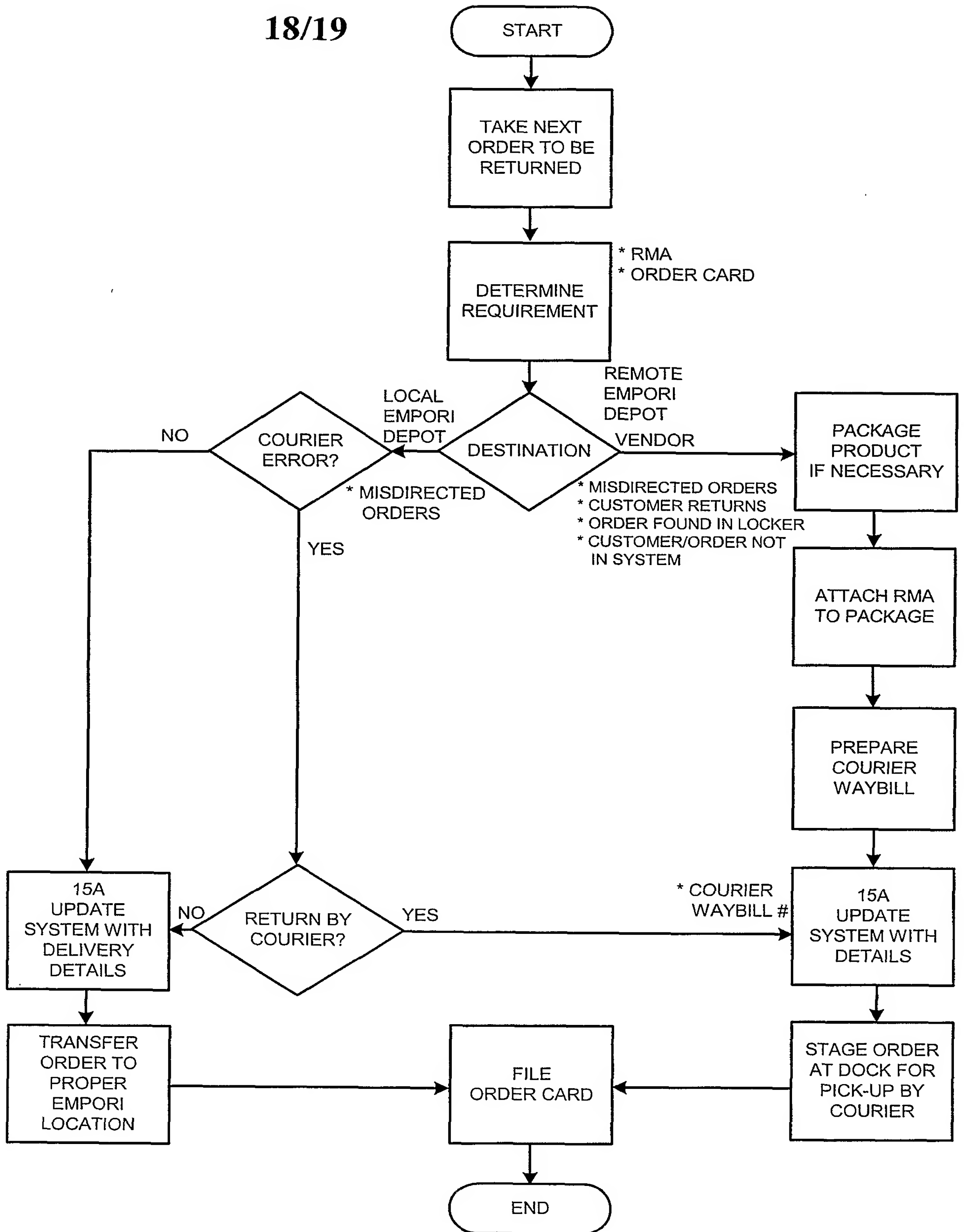


FIG. 5-14

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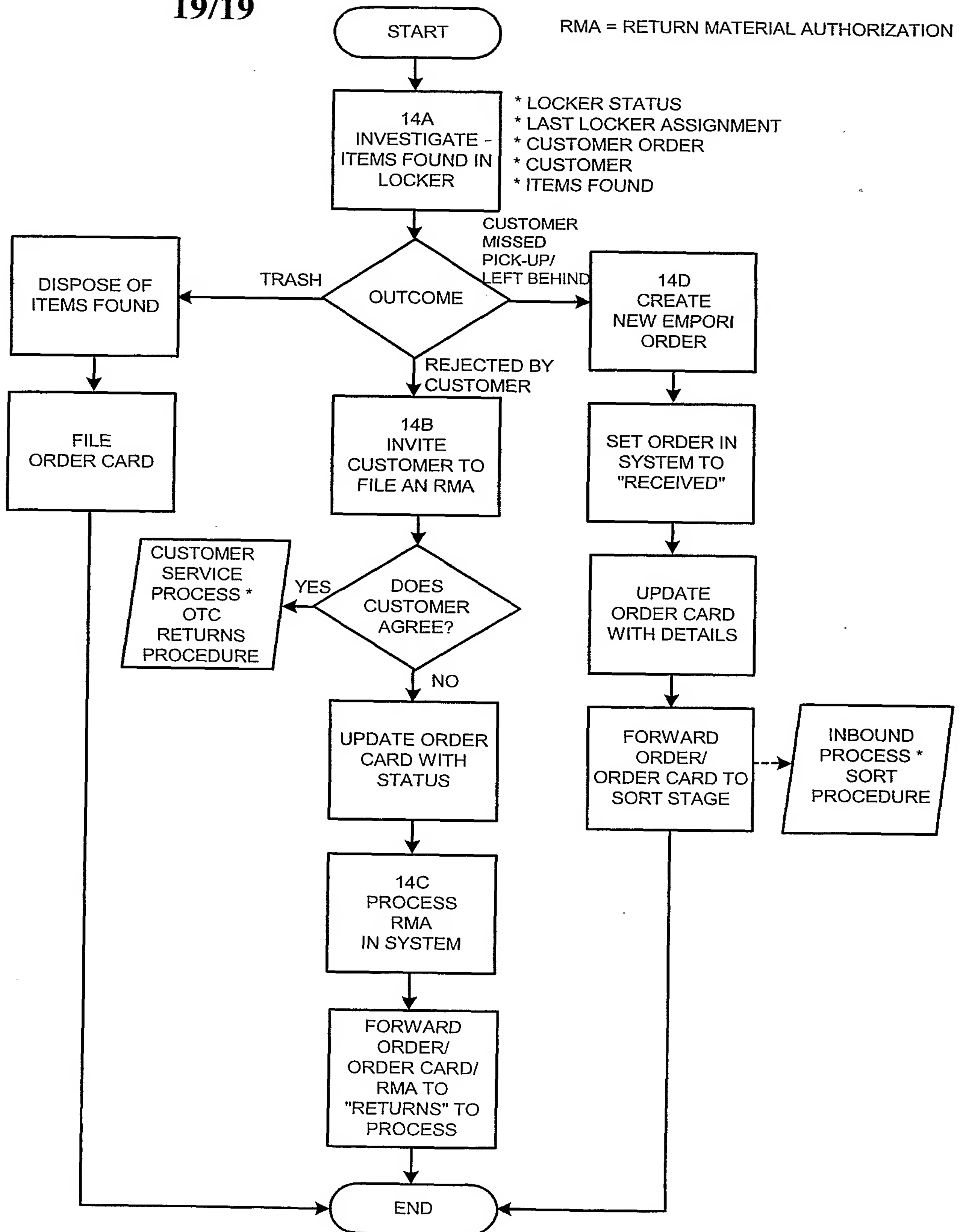


FIG. 5-15


DECLARATION OF NON-ESTABLISHMENT OF INTERNATIONAL SEARCH REPORT

(PCT Article 17(2)(a), Rules 13ter.1(c) and Rule 39)

Applicant's or agent's file reference 14849	IMPORTANT DECLARATION	Date of mailing(<i>day/month/year</i>) 11/10/2001
International application No. PCT/CA 01/ 00884	International filing date(<i>day/month/year</i>) 13/06/2001	(Earliest) Priority date(<i>day/month/year</i>) 16/06/2000
International Patent Classification (IPC) or both national classification and IPC		G06F17/60
Applicant OXFORD DEVELOPMENT GROUP, INC.		

This International Searching Authority hereby declares, according to Article 17(2)(a), that **no international search report will be established** on the international application for the reasons indicated below

1. ☒ The subject matter of the international application relates to:
- a. ☐ scientific theories.
 - b. ☐ mathematical theories
 - c. ☐ plant varieties.
 - d. ☐ animal varieties.
 - e. ☐ essentially biological processes for the production of plants and animals, other than microbiological processes and the products of such processes.
 - f. ☒ schemes, rules or methods of doing business.
 - g. ☐ schemes, rules or methods of performing purely mental acts.
 - h. ☐ schemes, rules or methods of playing games.
 - i. ☐ methods for treatment of the human body by surgery or therapy.
 - j. ☐ methods for treatment of the animal body by surgery or therapy.
 - k. ☐ diagnostic methods practised on the human or animal body.
 - l. ☐ mere presentations of information.
 - m. ☐ computer programs for which this International Searching Authority is not equipped to search prior art.
2. ☐ The failure of the following parts of the international application to comply with prescribed requirements prevents a meaningful search from being carried out:
- ☐ the description ☐ the claims ☐ the drawings
3. ☐ The failure of the nucleotide and/or amino acid sequence listing to comply with the standard provided for in Annex C of the Administrative Instructions prevents a meaningful search from being carried out:
- ☐ the written form has not been furnished or does not comply with the standard.
- ☐ the computer readable form has not been furnished or does not comply with the standard.
4. Further comments:

Name and mailing address of the International Searching Authority  European Patent Office, P.B. 5818 Patentlaan 2 NL-2280 HV Rijswijk Tel. (+31-70) 340-2040, Tx. 31 651 epo nl, Fax: (+31-70) 340-3016	Authorized officer Lucia Van Pinxteren
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FURTHER INFORMATION CONTINUED FROM PCT/ISA/ 203

The subject-matter claimed falls under the provisions of Article 17(2)(a)(i) and Rule 39.1(iii) PCT, such subject-matter relating to a method of doing business.

The applicant's attention is drawn to the fact that claims relating to inventions in respect of which no international search report has been established need not be the subject of an international preliminary examination (Rule 66.1(e) PCT). The applicant is advised that the EPO policy when acting as an International Preliminary Examining Authority is normally not to carry out a preliminary examination on matter which has not been searched. This is the case irrespective of whether or not the claims are amended following receipt of the search report or during any Chapter II procedure. If the application proceeds into the regional phase before the EPO, the applicant is reminded that a search may be carried out during examination before the EPO (see EPO Guideline C-VI, 8.5), should the problems which led to the Article 17(2) declaration be overcome.